

March 20, 1998

**CONTINUING MEDICAL EDUCATION PROGRAM  
“A GUIDE TO GULF WAR VETERANS’ HEALTH”**

**1. PURPOSE:** This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive defines the requirement that Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) physicians complete the Continuing Medical Education (CME) independent study “A Guide to Gulf War Veterans' Health.”

**2. BACKGROUND:** The Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards, in collaboration with the Office of Employee Education, has developed a CME Program to ensure that VA physicians are well informed regarding the latest developments of Gulf War veterans' health issues. The recently published CME independent study "A Guide to Gulf War Veterans' Health" is presently available to every VA physician in hard copy or on VA's Employee Education System (EES) WebPage. Sufficient copies of the CME program were mailed to each VA medical center Chief of Staff Office in late March 1998 for distribution to medical center physicians. It is designed to provide an introduction to clinical issues regarding Gulf War veterans. This independent study includes an overview of the Gulf War experience, the VA and Department of Defense health programs available for Gulf War veterans, and the common symptoms and diagnoses of these veterans. Emphasis is placed on the most recently available information from peer-reviewed clinical and scientific studies of Gulf War illnesses. This educational activity will enhance the ability of all VA physicians and other healthcare providers to provide quality medical services to Gulf War veterans.

**3. POLICY:** All VA physicians shall complete the independent study "A Guide to Gulf War Veterans' Health" as part of the VHA systemwide training program. VHA's EES, which maintains responsibility for the program, designates this continuing medical education activity for a maximum of 6 hours in category I credit.

**4. ACTION:** VA Medical Center Directors are responsible for ensuring that this educational program is completed by at least 90% of all full-time, part-time, and intermittent VA physicians by December 31, 1998. Chiefs of Staff may use the Academic Information Management (AIM) Center computer system to monitor their individual facility's training compliance in June 1998, September 1998, and January 1999. Systemwide compliance data will be provided by the AIM Center to the Environmental Agents Service and the Office of Employee Education on these dates. Most facility Chief of Staff Offices regularly access the AIM Center computer system over the Integrated Data Communications Utility (IDCU) to enter medical personnel training information into the database. For instructions on accessing the AIM Center for training compliance monitoring purposes, please see the AIM Center “How to access the AIM Center computer system” and “Physician Registration” instructions included with the mailing of the independent study booklet to all VA Medical Center Chief of Staff Offices.

**THIS VHA DIRECTIVE EXPIRES MARCH 31, 1999**

**4. REFERENCES:** None

**VHA DIRECTIVE 98-018**

**March 20, 1998**

**5. FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITY:** Questions regarding the independent study should be addressed to Karen Jones, Program Manager, Employee Education System, St. Louis Center at (314) 894-5739.

**6. RESCISSIONS:** This VHA directive will expire on March 31, 1999.

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